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BROWNBACK OPPOSES EMBRYONIC STEM CELL RESEARCH AT HEARING TODAY

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback today testified before the Senate Appropriations Labor, HHS, and Education Subcommittee opposing destructive embryonic stem cell research, and urging alternative adult stem cell research.

“We are here today to discuss some of the issues that have been raised regarding federal funding of human embryonic stem cell research,” Brownback said. “My position is that federally funded human embryonic stem cell research is illegal, immoral and unnecessary.

“Congress outlawed federal funding for harmful embryo research in 1996 and has maintained that prohibition ever since. The ban is broad-based and specific; funds cannot be used for ‘research in which a human embryo or embryos are destroyed, discarded or knowingly subjected to risk of injury or death.’ The intent of Congress is clear – if a research project requires the destruction of human embryos no federal funds should be used for that project.

“In brief, current legislation, the Stem Cell Research Act of 2000 (S.2015) would, among other and perhaps more serious policy changes, constitute a lifting of the ban on human embryo research, thereby allowing federal funding for researchers to kill living human embryos. Under this bill federal researchers would be allowed to obtain their own supply of living human embryos, which they would then be allowed to kill for research purposes. The very act of harvesting cells from live human embryos results in the death of the embryo. Therefore, if enacted, this bill would result in the deliberate destruction of human embryos.

“This research is problematic because it would use federal tax dollars to allow the government to procure, and therefore ‘own,’ a vast supply of living human embryos. The notion of ‘ownership,’ particularly by the Federal government, of other human beings is deeply disturbing.

“The bill even allows federal funding for destructive research using embryos created by cloning, so long as this does not result in ‘the reproductive cloning of a human being.’ On the one hand, this is an attempt to authorize the critical issue of human cloning by stealth; when what is really needed is the continuation of the full public debate. On the other hand, this approach recognizes that for the purposes of possible clinical applications, particularly to avoid possible tissue rejection, human cloning is the logical next step – or so-called, ‘therapeutic cloning.’ This means that live embryos created by researchers can be experimented on and destroyed, but allowing them to survive to live birth is prohibited. The bill defines a new class of human beings who, under the law, will simply not be allowed to live.

“There are legitimate areas of research which are showing more promise than embryonic stem cell research and which do not create moral and ethical difficulties. In the past, Congress has increased funding for NIH. New advances in adult stem cell research, being reported almost weekly, show more promise than destructive embryo research.

“Clearly we must continue to fight to help cure disease and to alleviate suffering. However, it is never acceptable to deliberately kill one innocent human being in order to help another. When did it become acceptable to use an evil means to pursue a good end, even a great one? Doesn’t the so-called good end actually become bad by using bad means? If we manage the cure of some diseases and the betterment of some aspects of bodily health by means that involve the killing of the most defenseless and innocent of human beings, we will rightfully be judged harshly by history as having sought some benefits at the expense of our humanity and moral being,” Brownback said.